

ABSTRACT
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RACIAL
STEREOTYPES AND LEVELS OF SELF-ESTEEM AMONG
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

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Thesis dated May, 1998

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between racial stereotypes associated with African American males and their levels of self-esteem. The sample for this study consisted of thirty-five African American males visiting a local mall in Atlanta, Georgia, and visiting a local health club in College Park, Georgia.

One questionnaire, divided into three sections, was issued to the participants. The three sections consisted of background information, perceptions of racial stereotypes, and an index of self-esteem. The racial stereotype variable was measured by an assessment of participants belief in racial stereotypes, their perceptions of other African American's views of African American males, and their perceptions of White American's views of African American males. The self-esteem variable was measured using Hudson's assessment scale. The results were analyzed utilizing frequency distribution, means, standard deviation, cross-tabulation, and Chi-Square.

The findings indicate that many African American males do not feel that the racial stereotypes that are generally associated with their population are actually reflective of their population. The findings also found that many African American males exhibit high levels of self-esteem. There was no statistical significance between the variables, thus, the null hypothesis was accepted.

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
RACIAL STEREOTYPES AND LEVELS OF SELF-ESTEEM AMONG
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

A THESIS

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BY

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Black males are no good,” “Black Males are dangerous,” “Most black males are drug abusers,” “Black males are unintelligent and have the lowest I.Qs,” “Black males are usually criminals and are very violent,” and “Black males are nothing but trouble.” Whether it is through personal accounts or through the media, directly spoken or implied, African American males are in constant danger of being negatively stereotyped by society. Over the years, African American males have been labeled as unitellectual, criminals, drug abusers, womanizers, and violent, just to name a few. These stereotypes are often very destructive in the proper functioning of these men. In fact, due to the constant exposure and enforcement, many black males began to believe these stereotypes. This causes them to “be socially castrated, insecure in their male identity, and lacking in positive concept.”¹

The media is the main source of stereotypes placed on African Americans. Such movies as “Boys in the Hood,” “How to be a Playa,” and “Booty Call,” all depict young African American males as either drug dealers and abusers, womanizers, or gangsters. Also, a lot of the “gansta” rap that is out now, also depict these stereotypes. What’s worse, a lot of times these productions are put out by African Americans themselves, most of who were brought under the influence of these negative stereotypes, and possibly believed them and adjusted their lives accordingly. Despite efforts from positive African

¹Robert Staples, “Masculinity and Race: The Duel Dilemma of Black Men,” Journal of Social Issues 34,1 (1996): 169-83.

American leaders to dispel these negative stereotypes, society is still being exposed to only one of the many lifestyles that many African Americans are being forced to live in.

Not only are these negative stereotypes detrimental to the self-esteem and self identity of these males, but they also influence the decision making of employers, police officers, teachers and other authority figures.² The despair that this may cause, along with low self-esteem and rage, “becomes forces of destruction, homicide, and suicide.”³

Although racial stereotypes have declined some in the past two decades, research found that there still exists a “consistent and negative contemporary stereotypes of Blacks” in general.⁴ As cited in Jacoby, Sniderman and Piazza, it was found that: “large numbers of whites still hold negative stereotypes of Blacks, and most make no effort at all to disguise their opinion.”⁵ They also found that 61% of respondents felt that “most Blacks on welfare could get a job,” 43 % felt that “Blacks could do better if they tried harder,” 42% felt that “Black neighborhoods are run down,” and 36% felt that “Blacks have a chip on their shoulder.”⁶ Another survey conducted by the Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago on Whites opinion of African Americans found that 62% of Whites surveyed felt that African Americans were lazier than Whites.⁷ In the

²Jeffery Johnson, “Stony the Road They Trod: The African American Male. Runta (Truth),” National Urban League Research Department Fact Sheet 3.2, 1990.

³Paula Allen-Meares, and Sondra Burman, “The Endangerment of African American Men: An Appeal for Social Work Action,” Social Work 40, 2 (Mar 1995): 268-274.

⁴Patricia G. Devine and Andrew J. Elliot, “Are Racial Stereotypes Really Fading? The Princeton Trilogy Revisited,” Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 21, 11 (Nov 1995): 1139-1150.

⁵Tamar Jacoby, “After Bigotry,” New Republic 210, 4 (Jan 1994): 36-39.

⁶Ibid.

⁷“The U.S.: Racial Stereotypes Persist in US, Study Finds.” The Christian Science Monitor 83, 32 (10 Jan 1991): 6.

same survey, 56% of Whites surveyed viewed African Americans as more violent prone than Whites, and 53% viewed them as less intelligent.⁸

When we consider the nature of stereotypes, we find that they may “express deep-seated prejudices, but for most people most of the time, they merely reflect the necessity to make better-than-random decisions at minimum information cost, often under time constraints.”⁹ Many who hold negative stereotypes of African American males may argue that their opinions are a direct result of the alarming statistics that suggest that African American Males are indeed becoming an endangered species. For example, in the past decade, homicide has been the leading cause of death among African American men between the ages of 15 and 34, with a large proportion being committed by other African Americans.¹⁰ However, these statistics do not address the common structural disadvantages and inequalities that often result in crime, such as “inadequate education and job training, unemployment and underemployment, and inequitable distribution of wealth and power.”¹¹

Also, positive images of black men are very seldom explored by significant and very influential sources of information, such as the mass media. This limits the perceptions that may be formed, and eventually cause others to misinterpret and stigmatize the entire African American male population. This stigmatization in turn may give rise and/or contribute to the structural injustices that are placed upon African American males as they affect the decision making of employers, court appointed

⁸Ibid.

⁹Pierre Ban den Berghe, “Rehabilitating Stereotypes,” Ethnic and Racial Studies 20 (Jan 1997): 1-16.

¹⁰Paula Allen-Meares, and Sondra Burman, “The Endangerment of African American Men: An Appeal for Social Work Action,” Social Work 40, 2 (Mar 1995): 268-274.

¹¹Ibid.

officials, and significant others who are beneficial to the well-being and success of African American men, and society in general. Therefore, the negative stereotypes that are formed “because” of statistics, may also actually be the same stereotypes that “cause” statistics.

Statement of the Problem

Most social science professionals agree that our environment has a significant influence on every area of our development and success in life. Whether we live in a positive or negative environment, our personal development is often structured around the experiences that we encounter within our environment and how we perceive those experiences. Up into adolescence, human beings in general, are all very impressionable. According to Erickson, it is not until adolescence that we develop a sense of identity.¹² Also, according to Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman, “the impinging environment acts to shape, enhance, or limit the innate ability and potential that we were all endowed with.”¹³

In addition to this, a large number of our children are exposed to the negative stereotypes that are being enforced in the movies, on television, and on the radio. In 1994, black households watched an average of 73 hours and 30 minutes of television each week, compared to the national average of 48 hours and 25 minutes for all households.¹⁴ Also, found in a report that was published in March of 1996, although 50% of black crime, and 47% of white crime committed in L.A. were considered violent crimes, 61% of crime stories about black perpetrators reported by a local news station

¹²Henry Tischler, Introduction to Sociology, 3rd ed. (Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc, 1990), 109.

¹³Charles Zastrow and Karen K. Kirst-Ashman, Understanding Human Behavior and the Social Environment, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishing Inc, 1994), 65.

¹⁴Christy Fisher, “Black, Hip, and Primed (To Shop),” American Demographics 18, 9 (Sept. 96): 52-58.

depicted violence, whereas only 36% of crime stories reported about white perpetrators depicted violence.¹⁵ In many cases, it is human nature that if you are exposed to a certain belief or value for a long length of time, it will not be long before you adapt to those beliefs and/or values. This raises a concern as to exactly what our children are hearing and learning about themselves, and how much of it they actually believe. More importantly, how much of it stays with them as they grow into adulthood, and began making important decisions that are bound to affect the rest of their lives.

The labeling theory implies that labels that are placed on individuals have a major impact on the person's life and often become self-fulfilling prophecies.¹⁶ One often becomes labeled through a series of circumstances, which eventually brings about more of the labeled behavior.¹⁷ By African American males being labeled as criminals, unintellectual, or violent, there may be a reproduction of certain behaviors that are consistent with these labels.

Self-esteem is also an important factor in the behaviors and success of an individual. Self-esteem has been linked to "academic achievement, performance in sports, involvement in substance abuse, teen-age pregnancy, quality of peer interaction, and adoption of specific coping skills."¹⁸ Research have also found that a relationship

¹⁵Stephen Buliansky, et.al, "Culture and Ideas: Local TV: Mayhen Central," U.S. News and World Report, 120, 9 (March 1996): 63-64.

¹⁶Charles Zastrow and Karen K. Kirst-Ashman, Understanding Human Behavior and the Social Environment, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishing Inc, 1994), 484.

¹⁷Henry Tischler, Introduction to Sociology, 3rd ed. (Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc, 1990), 205.

¹⁸Keith A. King, "Self-Concept and Self-Esteem: A Clarification of Terms," Journal of School Health 67, 2 (Feb 1997): 68-70.

does exist between group identity and self-esteem.¹⁹ According to the social identity theory, when an individual is a member of a group who is negatively viewed by society, he/she will eventually establish a negative view about him/herself, which in time can result in a reduction of self-esteem.²⁰ With respect to this theory, African American males are definitely being negatively accepted and are at a disadvantage in today's society, and therefore, their self-esteem is bound to be affected. If this affect occurs at an early age, or if African American males experience prejudice at an early age, it may cause them to react according to some of the behaviors that are negatively stereotypical of African American males. It may then become an issue of rebellion, and some behaviors that are performed in a rebellion stage may not be as easily dismissed or dispelled. This too can result in some of the stereotypes that are attached to African American males.

Significance and Purpose of the Study

According to the National Association of Social Workers, social work is defined "as the professional activity of helping individuals, groups, or communities enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning and creating societal conditions favorable to this goal."²¹ As social workers, this definition should serve as one of the primary goals in our practice. When we look at the societal conditions that many of our African American men are forced to live in, we find that they are often unfair and unjust. Many

¹⁹Jean S. Phinney, Cindy Lou Cantu, and Dawn A. Kurtz, "Ethnic and American Identity as Predictors of Self-Esteem Among African American, Latinos, and White Adolescent," Journal of Youth and Adolescence 26, 2 (April 1997): 165-185.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Robert L. Barker, The Social Work Dictionary, 2nd ed, (Washington: National Association of Social Workers Press, 1991), 221.

of these unfair conditions exists because of the negative stereotypes that society holds. As Allen-Meares and Burman states, "It behooves us to take action to right unfairness and injustice and to seek to improve the quality of life of those in need."²²

Social injustices, and devaluation of ones' social group through negative racial stereotypes leads to a sense of powerlessness, which eventually take charge of and/or direct the behaviors of an individual's life.²³ Learned helplessness can lead to a significant lack of self-esteem, and a lack of respect and love for one's social group. "Pride in self and heritage is necessary for healthy functioning."²⁴ Before change can occur, we must address issues that are detrimental to self-esteem.²⁵

In this study, the researcher hopes to find a significant relationship between levels of self-esteem, and exposure and belief in negative stereotypes. We know that they both affect the level of social functioning, but little is known about the relationship that exists between the two, or if a relationship does exist. Hopefully, the findings from this study will establish another basis or avenue for improving social functioning and societal conditions for all African American men.

²²Paula Allen-Meares, and Sondra Burman, "The Endangerment of African American Men: An Appeal for Social Work Action," Social Work 40, 2 (Mar 1995): 268-274.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following information is based on research that was gathered from articles and empirical studies published in professional journals on the two variables in the present study: racial stereotypes and self-esteem.

Racial Stereotypes

Racial stereotypes involves attaching a rigid and inaccurate concept or idea to a racial group.¹ They usually derive from an attempt to understand a group, but are often impaired when ones perceptions are limited to the behaviors of only a portion of the group. Although some stereotypes reflect a bit of reality, they are usually based on people's prejudices, with little respect to exposing a truth.² When we allow our prejudices to control our perceptions, it then becomes an issue of "selective perception and selective forgetting."³ We tend to perceive things in a certain way that will justify any prejudices that we may hold, while forgetting the reality that a large number of the given group does not process the characteristics that are suggested by the stereotype.

¹Charles Zastrow and Karen K. Kirst-Ashman, Understanding Human Behavior and the Social Environment, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishing Inc, 1994), 208.

²Pierre L. Van den Berghe, "Rehabilitating Stereotypes," Ethnic and Racial Studies 20 (Jan 1997): 1-16.

³Ibid.

African American males have definitely been the object of many of these stereotypes over the years. As Madhubuti stated in his book, African American males are constantly:

“... involved in the establishment of significant firsts, such as: first jailed, first killed in the streets, first under-employed, first fired, first confined to mental institutions, first imprisoned, first lynched, first involved with drugs and alcohol, first mis-educated, first denied medical treatment, first in suicide, first to be divorced, first denied normal benefits of this country, first to be blamed for “Black” problems -- indeed, Black men are the *first* victims.”⁴

Stereotypes and labels such as these can lead to or be the result of society perceiving certain behaviors as normal in African American communities and families.⁵ However, they do not always take into account some of the structural inequalities and discriminations that are present in African American communities. African American males earn on the average only 73% of the income earned by White males, and are widely regarded as less desirable employees, and therefore are less likely to be hired in a lot of jobs.⁶ Also, in urban areas, unemployment rates for young African American males are often above 50%, with many policy analysts referring to them as “unemployable due to lack of skills and education.”⁷

Education wise, African American males are four times more likely than White males to be suspended or expelled, and nine times more likely to be placed in special education classes.⁸ 20% to 30% of African American males drop out of high school

⁴Haki R. Madhubuti, Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous? (Chicago: Third World Press, 1990), 69.

⁵Evan Stark, “The Myth of Black Violence,” Social Work 38, 4 (July 1993): 485-490.

⁶Pedro A. Noguera, “Responding to the Crisis Confronting California’s Black Male Youth: Providing Support Without Furthering Marginalization,” Journal of Negro Education 65, 2 (Spring 1996): 219-236.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

prior to graduation and less than 40% of African American males entering college, graduate within six years.⁹ For those who do earn a four year college degree, there is a significant chance that they will still earn less than the average White male with a high school diploma.¹⁰

Our African American communities have the poorest schools and a severe lack of job opportunities available to African American males, both of which are necessary for social mobility.¹¹ When we add the powerlessness and the hopelessness that derive from these conditions, to the government programs and policies that are more or less designed to administer an even stronger control on poor African American communities, you get a sum that consist of an abundance of hostility towards society. Then the question arises, “Now what?” Any way you attempt to answer it, the words crime, imprisonment, unrestrained rage, physical assault, homicide, suicide, alcohol, and drugs, are bound to be present somewhere, thereby, sustaining the stereotypes that gave rise to these conditions in the first place.

Class and geographical location have a significant influence on the functioning of African American males. Many of the problems that have been associated with African American males have been found to be more predominant in poverty-stricken areas. “These are typically communities that lack a sustainable local economy, in which community institutions are weak or barely existent, and where environment degradation and an absence of social services are primary characteristics of the social landscape.”¹²

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Paula Allen-Meares, and Sondra Burman, “The Endangerment of African American Men: An Appeal for Social Work Action,” *Social Work* 40, 2 (Mar 1995): 268-274.

¹²Pedro A. Noguera, “Responding to the Crisis Confronting California’s Black Male Youth:

The problem with racial stereotypes used to describe a group, is that there are a significant number of individuals that are a part of that group, but do not meet the characteristics of the stereotypes. Research done on this topic found that those who perceived a group stereotypically, tend to judge individuals in a stereotypical manner.¹³ For example, with the issue of African American crime, African American males make up 40% to 50% of the prison population, and one third of African American men in their twenties are either incarcerated, on parole, or on probation.¹⁴ From this, the stereotype that African American males are criminals develop, and many take on the attitude that if you want to avoid being a victim, you better avoid young black men. Well, what about to other two-thirds that do not fit into this category? How are they affected? There is no doubt that many of the racial stereotypes about African American males are unfair and discriminatory.

Many who hold negative stereotypes about African American males know little about the conditions in African American communities and make no effort to acquire knowledge.¹⁵ They come to expect African American males to live up to the stereotypes, and concentrate more on instances where the stereotypes were validated than on the instances where they were not, no matter how large the difference is between the two.¹⁶

Providing Support Without Furthering Marginalization," Journal of Negro Education 65, 2 (Spring 1996): 219-236.

¹³Cary S. Ryan, Charles M. Judd, and Bernadette Park, "Effects of Racial Stereotypes on Judgments of Individuals: The Moderating Role of Perceived Group Variability," Journal of Experimental Psychology 32, 1 (Jan 1996): 71-103.

¹⁴Pierre L. Van den Berghe, "Rehabilitating Stereotypes," Ethnic and Racial Studies 20 (Jan 1997): 1-16.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley, "Public Perceptions of Race and Crime: The Role of Racial Stereotypes," American Journal of Political Science 40, 2 (April 1997): 375-401.

The media also plays a big role in the formation and sustaining of these stereotypes. They are very powerful in influencing and encouraging social judgment.¹⁷ In a recent study, Ford conducted an experiment on 40 white subjects to test the hypothesis that stereotypical television portrayals of African Americans increase the likelihood that whites will make negative social perception judgments of an African American target person. He showed them comedy skits featuring stereotypical or neutral portrayals of African American characters, and asked them to read a vignette describing an incident in which a college student was allegedly assaulted by his roommate, but there was no conclusive proof. In half of the conditions, the offender was assumed to be white, and in the other half, they were assumed to be black, and the subjects were asked to rate the likelihood that the alleged offender was guilty of assault. Findings showed that guilt ratings of the black target were significantly higher, confirming that judgments of the black target was more negative after viewing stereotypical comedy skits.¹⁸

Black male imagery in the media have been one that has been characterized by violence, crime, uncaring and unreliable fatherhood, verbal and physical abuse, and just down right dangerous.¹⁹ In less serious or comical media exposure, African American males are seen as fun-loving, irresponsible, happy-go-lucky, and poor, with few being seen as having an identifiable job.²⁰ Even those who are considered to represent a

¹⁷Thomas Ford, "Effects of Stereotypical Television Portrayals of African -Americans on Person Perception," Social Psychology Quarterly 60, 3 (September 1997): 266-278.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Helan E. Page, "'Black Male' Imagery and Media Containment of African American Men," American Anthropologist 99, 1 (1997): 99-111.

²⁰Thomas Ford, "Effects of Stereotypical Television Portrayals of African-Americans on Person Perception," Social Psychology Quarterly 60, 3 (September 1997): 266-278.

positive black male image in the media such as Bill Cosby, and Michael Jordan, have to live under the premise that although they are receiving their fame and glory now, it comes at the cost of subjection to media observation. As Page suggests, "An African American man is never relieved, no matter the extent of his success, from the constant possibility and incessant fear that he might one day become the focus of surveillance and rigorously portrayed as unembraceable - regarded in the end, as some kind of good-for-nothing nigger."²¹

Self-Esteem

There are many ways to define self-esteem. It can be defined as a person's judgment of his or her own value.²² It can be defined as the difference in a person's perception of how he would like to be, and how he actually is.²³ It can also be defined as a person's perception of how others view him or her.²⁴ However defined, self-esteem is an important factor in the behaviors of individuals.

According to Hughs and Demo, there are three theoretical principles of self-esteem that have been developed over the years. The first is reflected appraisals, which suggests that a person's self-esteem is a product of how that person believes others see him.²⁵ Therefore, if African Americans are constantly viewed in a negative way by society, they

²¹Helan E. Page, "'Black Male' Imagery and Media Containment of African American Men," American Anthropologist 99, 1 (1997): 99-111.

²²Charles Zastrow and Karen K. Kirst-Ashman, Understanding Human Behavior and the Social Environment, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishing Inc, 1994), 123.

²³Keith A. King, "Self-Concept, and Self-Esteem: A Clarification of Terms," Journal of School Health, 67, 2 (1997): 68-70.

²⁴Michael Hughes and David H. Demo, "Self-Perceptions of Black Americans: Self-Esteem and Personal Efficacy," American Journal of Sociology, 95, 1 (1989): 132-159.

²⁵Ibid.

will eventually view themselves negatively. The second is the theory of social comparison, which suggest that self-esteem is partly a result of individuals comparing themselves with others, and than evaluating themselves based on their comparison.²⁶ We live in a society where racial discrimination and injustice is a given at some point in most African American lives. This implies that if we were to compare the lifestyles that are associated with race, we will find that it is much better to be White, than it is to be an African American. The final theory is that of self-attribution, which suggest that self-esteem results from experiences with successes and failures.²⁷ Due to the unequivallent stresses and discriminations that many African Americans have to deal with, there are bound to be several failures in the average African American life. This theory suggests that these failures will negatively affect self-esteem among African Americans.

When we take these theories into consideration, with respect to the stereotypes placed on African American males, we may assume that African American males hold both characteristics of low self-esteem and negative ethnic identity. However, research done on this topic found results that are quite different. For example, in a study done on African American, Latino, and White adolescents, the researcher found that the two minority groups had levels of self-esteem that were equal to or greater than their White counterparts, especially when there was a positive attachment to one's own ethnic group.²⁸

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Michael Hughes and David H. Demo, "Self-Perceptions of Black Americans: Self-Esteem and Personal Efficacy," American Journal of Sociology, 95, 1 (1989): 132-159.

²⁸Jean S. Phinney, "Ethnic and American Identity as Predictors of Self-Esteem Among African American, Latino, and White Adolescents," Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 26, 2 (1997): 165-185.

Another study, which found high levels of self-esteem among African American adolescents, also found that negative views of a person's race effects self-esteem only when the negative views are accepted by that person.²⁹ This same study also found that the family is the primary nurturant of feelings related to self-worth, which may explain the high levels of self-esteem found in African American males.³⁰ Given these findings, the theories on self-esteem development that have been generated over the years, may not be applicable to the African American population.

Self-esteem has also been reported to be significantly related to masculinity in males. In their study of undergraduate students at a large Midwestern University, Burnett, Anderson, and Heppner found that those individuals who had large masculine characteristics reported greater self-esteem.³¹ Similarly, another study found that the strongest and most consistent predictor of self-esteem among a sample of both high school and college students, was possession of higher levels of masculine sex role orientations.³²

Every time a African American male experiences some form of discrimination, his masculinity is threatened. Males have generally been socialized to be tough, aggressive, independent, strong, and the provider of the family. However, if they have been labeled in such a way that they are unsuccessful in meeting sex roles expectations, their needs are bound to be unfulfilled, and thus their self-esteem negatively affected.

²⁹Micah McCreary, Lesley Slavin, and Eloise Berry, "Predicting Problem Behavior and Self-Esteem Among African Americans Adolescent," Journal of Adolescent Research, 11, 2 (1996): 216-234.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Jeffery Burnett, Wayne Anderson, and Paul Heppner, "Gender Roles and Self-Esteem: A Consideration of Environmental Factors," Journal of Counseling and Development 73, 3 (Jan 1995): 323-326.

³²Alyce Holland, and Thomas Andre, "The Relationship of Self-Esteem to Selected Personal and Environmental Resources of Adolescents," Adolescence 29, 114 (Summer 1994): 345-360.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework will be labeling theory. Labeling theory suggests that when people are assigned a label that indicates some kind of deviance, not only will others tend to react to the subjects as though they were deviant, but the subjects themselves may begin to act in a way that meets others' expectations.³³ Labeling often leads to self-fulfilling prophecies. This occurs when there is an increase in labeled behaviors because others' expectations are governing the labeled individual's actions.³⁴

When this theory is applied to the stereotypes that are placed on African American males, the proposed outcome will be that these males may come to accept these stereotypes, and may eventually live up to them. If African American males are constantly exposed to negative views and expectations about themselves, their behavior may lean towards fulfilling these expectations.

Research has shown that in order for the labeling process to affect behavior, the label must first be accepted by the labeled individual, and it usually accumulates over time.³⁵ Research has also found that labeling is more detrimental when it is discharged by informal groups, such as family, friends, teachers, and significant others.³⁶ Despite the negative views that society may exhibit towards African Americans in general, most

³³Robert Barker, The Social Work Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Washington: National Association of Social Workers, 1991), 127.

³⁴Charles Zastrow, Social Work with Groups, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1993), 501-502.

³⁵Susan F. Stager, Laurie Chassin, and Richard Young, "Determinants of Self-Esteem Among Labeled Adolescents," Social Psychology Quarterly 46, 1 (1983): 3-10.

³⁶Lening Zhang, "Informal Reactions and Delinquency," Criminal Justice and Behavior 24, 1 (March 1997): 129-150.

stable African American families are generally supportive and encouraging towards their family. Although this may depreciate the effects of the labeling theory on African Americans, it does not control for any indirect exposure to negative stereotypes. For example, the music we listen to and the television programs that we watch, are brimming with negative stereotypes that may not be so obvious. We may unwittingly began to live out these stereotypes because we do not necessarily see them for what they really are.

The labeling theory has also been used in determining levels of self-esteem in individuals. One study has found that although the labeling process does not affect the self-esteem of all labeled individuals, it does negatively effect the self-esteem of those who sees the label in a negative way, and who perceive the label to be reflective of them in some way.³⁷ Another study done on a group of labeled and unlabeled adolescents, found that a significant difference does exist between the self-concepts of the two, with lower self-concept found in the labeled group.³⁸ These studies suggest that labeled individuals will eventually integrate the labels into their self perceptions. When this occurs, a new identity is formed based on the label, with results consisting of behaviors that are anticipated by the label.³⁹ This supports the main principle of the labeling theory, which is that the process of labeling brings about more of the labeled behavior, and that there is a significant correlation between labeling and self-esteem.

³⁷Susan F. Stager, Laurie Chassin, and Richard Young, "Determinants of Self-Esteem Among Labeled Adolescents," Social Psychology Quarterly 46, 1 (1983): 3-10.

³⁸Nadhim Al-Talib and Christine Griffin, "Labeling Effect on Adolescents' Self-Concept," International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology 38, 1 (1994): 47-57.

³⁹Melvin Ray and William Downs, "An Empirical Test of Labeling Theory Using Longitudinal Data," Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency 23, 2 (May 1986): 169-194.

Statement of the Hypotheses

This study addresses the research question: Is there a relationship between negative stereotypes and self-esteem in African American males? The researcher puts forth three hypotheses to answer this question. The first is that many African American males feel that negative stereotypes towards their population do exist. The second is that many African Americans feel that these negative stereotypes are reflective of their population. The final hypothesis is that there is a negative correlation between self-esteem and belief in negative stereotypes, where an increase in one will reflect a decrease in the other.

Variables

In the present study, the two variables that will be examined are racial stereotypes and self-esteem. The independent variable is racial stereotypes that are associated with African American men. This includes labels such as criminals, lazy, violent, womanizers, irresponsible, unintelligent, and dangerous. The dependent variable in this study is self-esteem. This is generally defined as the way a person sees and feels about himself.

Terms and Definitions

These terms were taken from the National Association of Social Workers Social Work Dictionary.⁴⁰

Discrimination - The prejudgement and negative treatment of people based on identifiable characteristics such as race, gender, religion, or ethnicity.

Ethnicity - An orientation toward the shared national origin, religion, race, or language of a people; also, a person's ethnic affiliation, by virtue of one or more of these characteristic and traditions.

Inequality - Social disparity in power, opportunity, privilege, and justice.

Labeling - The application of a name to a person or a person's problem based on observed traits or patterns of behavior.

Labeling Theory - The hypothesis that when people are assigned a label to indicate some kind of disorder or deviance, others tend to react to the subjects as though they were deviant. Also, the subjects may begin to act in a way that meets the others' expectation.

Perceptions - The psychic impressions made by the five senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touch), and the way these impressions are interpreted cognitively and emotionally, based on one's life experiences.

Prejudices - An opinion about an individual, group, or phenomenon that is developed without proof or systematic evidence.

Self-Esteem - An individual's sense of personal worth that is derived more from inner thoughts and values than from praise and recognition from others.

Self-fulfilling Prophecy - An expectation one has of another person, group, or social phenomena that influences the way that person, group, or phenomenon is subsequently perceived.

⁴⁰Robert Barker, The Social Work Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Washington: National Association of Social Workers, 1991), 127.

Social Inequality - A condition in which some members of a society receive fewer opportunities or benefits than other members.

Social Mobility - The degree to which a society permits, encourages, or forces people to change statuses, geographic residence, socioeconomic level, or cultural value orientations.

Stereotypes - Preconceived and relatively fixed ideas about an individual, group or social status. These ideas are usually based on superficial characteristics or overgeneralizations of traits observed in some members of the group.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the relationship between racial stereotypes associated with African American males, and their levels of self-esteem. This chapter presents the design of the study, including a description of the research design, sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Research Design

The research design that was used in this study is one group posttest-only design. This design was selected because in this study, we were only interested in finding out if a relationship exists between beliefs in racial stereotypes, and levels of self-esteem. There is need for only one intervention, which in this case is a questionnaire, and only one measurement. The sample was then given a questionnaire to assess their views of racial stereotypes, and their levels of self-esteem. This was the first and only intervention. The data collected was then analyzed to assess the possible existence of a relationship between the two variables.

Sample

The population for this study consisted of African American males over the age of eighteen, who were consumers at a local mall in Atlanta, Georgia, or who were either consumers or employees at a local health club in College Park, Georgia.. These are public places where a large number of African American males can be found. A total of thirty-five African American males were used as a sample for this study. The sampling frame

consists of those African American males who visited the local mall, or who worked out at the local health club, on a given day, during a given time period.

The method of sampling was nonprobability convenience sampling. This method was chosen because the sample consisted of those African American males that were nearest and most available. In both settings, the participants were approached by either myself, or the volunteer assisting me, as they entered the facility. A total of twenty respondents were obtained from the mall, and a total of fifteen were obtained from the health club.

Instrument

The questionnaire that was used in this study was designed by the researcher. It was divided into three sections. The first section consisted of background information designed to assess education and economic factors, both of which have been proven to influence self-esteem. The second section consisted of perceptions and beliefs in stereotypes placed on African American males. This section was divided into three sub-sections. The first sub-section asked participants their perceptions of themselves, in respects to negative stereotypes. The second sub-section asked participants their opinions of other African Americans perceptions of African American males. The last sub-sections asked participants of their opinions of White American perceptions of African American males. The same stereotypes were used in all sub-sections. This was done to assess if a relationship exists between African American males perceptions of themselves, and perceived White Americans and other African Americans attitudes towards them. The last section consisted of a self-esteem index, which was taken from Hudson's 1990 Clinical Assessment package.¹ This is a 25 item scale which measures

¹ Alvin Minnifield, "A descriptive study of self-esteem and anxiety: Key Issues in an HIV support group for African American Males," (Master thesis, Clark-Atlanta University, 1995).

how an individual sees himself. It has a reliability score of 93, which is a score indicating that the instrument is accurate and dependable.

Data Collection

Data were collected by the use of a questionnaire, which was administered by researcher and a volunteer. The participants were approached by the researcher or the volunteer, and were given an explanation of the purpose of the study, and asked to participate. The participants were told that participation was strictly voluntary, and that they were not under any obligation. To ensure confidentiality, an envelope was attached to the questionnaire, and the participants were asked to place the completed questionnaire in the envelope, seal it, and place the sealed envelope in a larger envelope, where they were mixed with other completed questionnaires.

Data Analysis

The information obtained from the questionnaire was entered into the Statistical Package for The Social Sciences for Windows (SPSS Win) computer program.² The use of descriptive statistics, including the mean, median, mode, and cross-tabulation was used to analyze the data collected. Chi-square was utilized to establish if a relationship existed between the two variables: stereotypes and self-esteem, and between demographic information and each of the two variables. Contingency coefficient was utilized to test the strength of the relationship between stereotypes and self-esteem.

²N.H. Nie, D.H. Hull, J.C. Jenkins, K. Steinbrunner, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, 2nd Ed., 1985, New York: McGraw-Hill.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This chapter will summarize the data collected from the participants of the study. Table 1 represents the demographic information of the participants in the study. There was a total of thirty-five respondents in this study, all of which were African American males. The participants ranged in age from twenty to fifty-five, with the mean age being thirty-three. Of all who responded, 25.7 percent had completed high school, 8.6 percent had completed some college or technical school, 40.0 percent had a college degree, 14.3 percent had completed some graduate school, and 11.4 percent had a graduate degree.

In regards to family income, 11.4 percent of participants were from families earning a yearly income of \$15,000 or less, 17.1 percent were from families earning between \$16,000 and \$25,000, 25.7 percent were from families earning between \$26,000 and \$35,000, 14.3 percent were from families earning between \$36,000 and \$45,000, and 31.4 percent were from families earning over \$45,000 a year. Finally, of all the respondents, 65.7 percent have never been convicted of a crime other than a traffic offense, which is contrary to popular belief about African American males.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Demographic Information
(N = 35)

	Frequency	Percent
1. What is your age?		
20-25	8	22.9
26-30	7	20
31-35	10	28.6
36-40	6	17.1
41-45	1	2.9
Over 45	3	8.6
What is the highest Level of education completed?		
9 - 12 grade	9	25.7
Some college or technical school	3	8.6
Completed college or technical school	14	40
Some graduate school	5	14.3
Completed graduate school	4	11.4
3. Have you ever been convicted of a crime other than a traffic offense?		
Yes	12	34.3
No	23	65.7
4. What is your family's average income per year?		
\$15,000 or Less	4	11.4
\$25,000 - \$16,000	6	17.1
\$35,000 - \$26,000	9	25.7
\$45,000 - \$36,000	5	14.3
Above \$45,000	11	31.4

Table 2 represents the frequency distribution of the stereotype variable. Findings from the frequency distribution indicated that participants belief in stereotype had a mean score of 1.853, with non-belief at a value of 2.0, and belief at a value of 1.0. This suggests that most of the participants did not believe that stereotypes generally associated with African American males, are reflective of their population.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Stereotype Variable
(N = 35)

	African American males perceptions of themselves		Perceived African American's views of African American males		Perceived White American's views of African American males	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
More likely to commit violent crime	Yes=10 No=25	28.6% 71.4%	Yes=15 No=20	42.9% 57.1%	Yes=28 No=7	80.0% 20.0%
Less intelligent than whites	Yes=4 No=31	11.4% 88.6%	Yes=2 No=33	5.7% 94.3%	Yes=25 No=10	71.4% 28.6%
More likely to abuse drugs and alcohol	Yes=9 No=26	25.7% 74.3%	Yes=8 No=27	22.9% 77.1%	Yes=27 No=8	77.1% 22.9%
Lazy	Yes=3 No=32	8.6% 91.4%	Yes=13 No=22	37.1% 62.9%	Yes=25 No=10	71.4% 28.6%
Irresponsible	Yes=4 No=31	11.4% 88.6%	Yes=11 No=24	31.4% 68.6%	Yes=25 No=10	71.4% 28.6%
No self-control	Yes=3 No=32	8.6% 91.4%	Yes=7 No=28	20.0% 80.0%	Yes=27 No=8	77.1% 22.9%
Make poor fathers	Yes=6 No=29	17.1% 82.9%	Yes=9 No=26	25.7% 74.3%	Yes=24 No=10	68.6% 28.6%
Womanizers	Yes=8 No=27	22.9% 77.1%	Yes=12 No=23	34.3% 65.7%	Yes=26 No=9	74.3% 25.7%
Criminals	Yes=4 No=31	11.4% 88.6%	Yes=7 No=28	20.0% 80.0%	Yes=27 No=8	77.1% 22.9%
Inarticulate	Yes=5 No=29	14.3% 82.9%	Yes=5 No=29	14.3% 82.9%	Yes=24 No=10	68.6% 28.6%
Can not hold a descent job	Yes=5 No=30	14.3% 85.7%	Yes=5 No=30	14.3% 85.7%	Yes=22 No=13	62.9% 37.1%
Unwilling to work	Yes=6 No=29	17.1% 82.9%	Yes=6 No=29	17.1% 82.9%	Yes=21 No=14	60.0% 40.0%
Whether make a living participating in illegal activities	Yes=3 No=32	8.6% 91.4%	Yes=7 No=28	20.0% 80.0%	Yes=23 No=12	65.7% 34.3%
Dangerous	Yes=3 No=32	8.6% 91.4%	Yes=10 No=25	28.6% 71.4%	Yes=27 No=8	77.1% 22.9%

Findings from the frequency distribution of participants' perception of African Americans views of African American males, found a mean score of 1.761. This suggests that on average, participants did not feel that other members of their race hold the negative beliefs that are associated with African American males.

Finding from the frequency distribution of participants' perceptions of White American views of African American males, found a mean score of 1.281. This suggests that the participants do believe that many White American still hold negative beliefs about African American males.

Tables 3 represents the frequency distribution of the self-esteem variable. The questions are listed, with the response categories directly following. Both the frequency and the percentage of the responses are listed.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Self-Esteem Variables
(N = 35)

	Frequency	Percent
47. I feel that people would not like me if they really knew me well.		
None of the time	15	42.9
Very rarely	8	22.9
A little of the time	1	2.9
Some of the time	5	14.3
A good part of the time	3	8.6
Most of the time	2	5.7
All of the time	1	2.9
48. I feel that others get along much better than I do.		
None of the time	18	51.4
Very rarely	7	20
A little of the time	3	8.6
Some of the time	6	17.1
A good part of the time	0	0
Most of the time	1	2.9
All of the time	0	0
49. I feel that I am a beautiful person.		
None of the time	1	2.9
Very rarely	0	0
A little of the time	0	0
Some of the time	1	2.9
A good part of the time	2	5.7
Most of the time	14	40
All of the time	17	48.6
50. When I am with others, I feel they are glad I am with them.		
None of the time	0	0
Very rarely	1	2.9
A little of the time	0	0
Some of the time	5	14.3
A good part of the time	9	25.7
Most of the time	16	45.7
All of the time	4	11.4

(Table 3 - Continued)

	Frequency	Percent
51. I feel that people really like to talk with me.		
None of the time	0	0
Very rarely	2	5.7
A little of the time	0	0
Some of the time	3	8.6
A good part of the time	3	8.6
Most of the time	19	54.3
All of the time	8	22.9
52. I feel that I am a very competent person.		
None of the time	0	0
Very rarely	0	0
A little of the time	0	0
Some of the time	3	8.6
A good part of the time	0	0
Most of the time	8	22.9
All of the time	24	68.6
53. I think I make a good impression on others.		
None of the time	0	0
Very rarely	0	0
A little of the time	0	0
Some of the time	2	5.7
A good part of the time	5	14.3
Most of the time	15	42.9
All of the time	13	37.1
54. I feel that I need more self-confidence.		
None of the time	10	28.6
Very rarely	8	22.9
A little of the time	4	11.4
Some of the time	9	25.7
A good part of the time	1	2.9
Most of the time	3	8.6
All of the time	0	0

(Table 3 - Continued)

	Frequency	Percent
55. When I am with strangers, I am very nervous.		
None of the time	13	37.1
Very rarely	10	28.6
A little of the time	3	8.6
Some of the time	6	17.1
A good part of the time	1	2.9
Most of the time	2	5.7
All of the time	0	0
56. I think that I am a dull person.		
None of the time	17	48.6
Very rarely	11	31.4
A little of the time	3	8.6
Some of the time	3	8.6
A good part of the time	1	2.9
Most of the time	0	0
All of the time	0	0
57. I feel ugly.		
None of the time	29	82.9
Very rarely	5	14.3
A little of the time	0	0
Some of the time	1	2.9
A good part of the time	0	0
Most of the time	0	0
All of the time	0	0
58. I feel that others have more fun than I do.		
None of the time	13	37.1
Very rarely	8	22.9
A little of the time	2	5.7
Some of the time	8	22.9
A good part of the time	3	8.6
Most of the time	0	0
All of the time	1	2.9

(Table 3 - Continued)

	Frequency	Percent
59. I feel that I bore people.		
None of the time	19	54.2
Very rarely	12	34.3
A little of the time	1	2.9
Some of the time	3	8.6
A good part of the time	0	0
Most of the time	0	0
All of the time	0	0
60. I think my friends find me interesting.		
None of the time	0	0
Very rarely	0	0
A little of the time	0	0
Some of the time	4	11.4
A good part of the time	5	14.3
Most of the time	20	57.1
All of the time	6	17.1
61. I think I have a good sense of humor.		
None of the time	0	0
Very rarely	0	0
A little of the time	0	0
Some of the time	5	14.3
A good part of the time	4	11.4
Most of the time	10	28.6
All of the time	16	45.7
62. I feel very self-conscious when I am with strangers.		
None of the time	13	37.1
Very rarely	9	25.7
A little of the time	2	5.7
Some of the time	10	28.6
A good part of the time	0	0
Most of the time	0	0
All of the time	1	2.9

(Table 3 - Continued)

	Frequency	Percent
63. I feel that if I could be more like people, I would have it made.		
None of the time	26	74.3
Very rarely	7	20
A little of the time	0	0
Some of the time	2	5.7
A good part of the time	0	0
Most of the time	0	0
All of the time	0	0
64. I feel that people have a good time when they are with me.		
None of the time	0	0
Very rarely	0	0
A little of the time	0	0
Some of the time	3	8.6
A good part of the time	7	20
Most of the time	19	54.3
All of the time	6	17.1
65. I feel like a wallflower when I go out.		
None of the time	20	57.1
Very rarely	9	25.7
A little of the time	1	2.9
Some of the time	3	8.6
A good part of the time	1	2.9
Most of the time	1	2.9
All of the time	0	0
66. I feel I get pushed around more than others.		
None of the time	18	51.4
Very rarely	12	34.3
A little of the time	2	5.7
Some of the time	2	5.7
A good part of the time	0	0
Most of the time	0	0
All of the time	1	2.9

(Table 3 - Continued)

	Frequency	Percent
67. I think I am a rather nice person.		
None of the time	0	0
Very rarely	0	0
A little of the time	0	0
Some of the time	2	5.7
A good part of the time	1	2.9
Most of the time	17	48.6
All of the time	15	42.9
68. I feel that people really like me very much.		
None of the time	0	0
Very rarely	1	2.9
A little of the time	1	2.9
Some of the time	2	5.7
A good part of the time	3	8.6
Most of the time	19	54.3
All of the time	9	25.7
69. I feel that I am a likable person.		
None of the time	0	0
Very rarely	0	0
A little of the time	0	0
Some of the time	2	5.7
A good part of the time	1	2.9
Most of the time	18	54.1
All of the time	14	40
70. I am afraid I will appear foolish to others		
None of the time	25	71.4
Very rarely	5	14.3
A little of the time	1	2.9
Some of the time	4	11.4
A good part of the time	0	0
Most of the time	0	0
All of the time	0	0

(Table 3 - Continued)

	Frequency	Percent
71. My friends think very highly of me.		
None of the time	0	0
Very rarely	0	0
A little of the time	0	0
Some of the time	3	8.6
A good part of the time	2	5.7
Most of the time	19	54.3
All of the time	11	31.4

Participants in this study scored 16.476 on the Hudson's Index of Self-Esteem. The higher the score, the greater the magnitude of the problem. Generally, those who have a score over 30 have been found to have problems in the area being measured. Given the score of the participants, it is safe to say that on average, the participants exhibit high levels of self-esteem.

Tables 4, 5, and 6 represents the chi-square analysis of the two variables. The third hypothesis given by the researcher stated that there was a negative correlation between self-esteem, and a belief in negative stereotypes.

Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis of Independent and Dependent Variables
(N = 35)

Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem	DF	Chi-Square	Contingency Coefficient
Do you believe that African American males:			
Are more likely to commit violent crimes?	8	7.48052	0.54183
Are less intelligent than whites?	8	8.47059	0.56569
Are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol?	8	12.18462	0.63535
Are lazy?	8	3.94965	0.31844
Are irresponsible?	8	2.11765	0.32444
Have no self-control?	8	2.11765	0.32444
Make poor fathers?	8	3.6	0.40825
Are womanizers?	8	9.32143	0.5841
Are criminals?	8	9.5625	0.58902
Are inarticulate?	8	8.97222	0.58775
Can not hold a descent job?	8	4.8	0.45883
Are unwilling to work?	8	3.6	0.40825
Would whether make a living participating in illegal activities?	8	2.80449	0.27237
Are dangerous?	8	18	0.70711

(p=.05)

Table 5: Chi-Square Analysis of Independent and Dependent Variables
(N = 35)

Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem	DF	Chi-Square	Contingency Coefficient
Do you believe that most African Americans hold the following perceptions that African American males:			
Are more likely to commit violent	8	8.88312	0.57483
Are less intelligent than whites?	8	4.5	0.44721
Are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol?	8	6.75	0.52223
Are lazy?	8	8.88312	0.57483
Are irresponsible?	8	8.25	0.56061
Have no self-control?	8	3.6	0.40825
Make poor fathers?	8	5.53846	0.48507
Are womanizers?	8	8.88312	0.57483
Are criminals?	8	9.32143	0.5841
Are inarticulate?	8	4.15556	0.4432
Can not hold a descent job?	8	7.2	0.53452
Are unwilling to work?	8	5.46429	0.48257
Would whether make a living participating in illegal activities?	8	7.2	0.53452
Are dangerous?	8	9.32143	0.5841

(p=.05)

Table 6: Chi-Square Analysis of Independent and Dependent Variables
(N = 35)

Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem	DF	Chi-Square	Contingency Coefficient
Do you believe that most White Americans hold the following perceptions that African American males:			
Are more likely to commit violent	8	8.03077	0.55544
Are less intelligent than whites?	8	8.18182	0.55902
Are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol?	8	8.03077	0.55544
Are lazy?	8	7.48052	0.54183
Are irresponsible?	8	7.48052	0.54183
Have no self-control?	8	11.35385	0.62193
Make poor fathers?	8	7.48052	0.54183
Are womanizers?	8	9	0.57735
Are criminals?	8	8.03077	0.55544
Are inarticulate?	8	8.97222	0.58775
Can not hold a descent job?	8	7.875	0.55168
Are unwilling to work?	8	6	0.5
Would whether make a living participating in illegal activities?	8	5.85	0.49526
Are dangerous?	8	8.03077	0.55544

(p=.05)

The chi-square analysis of the relationship between self-esteem, and racial stereotypes revealed that no statistical significance existed between the two variables. The degrees of freedom for the current study was eight, with a chi-square value of 15.51. Since none of chi-square values in this study were at or above this value, it was concluded that no statistical significance existed. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

In summation, it was found that no statistically significant relationship existed between self-esteem, and the racial stereotypes placed on African American males. Although many of the participants reported that they do believe that racial stereotypes facing their population still exist among White Americans, many of them do not believe that they are reflective of their population. This may have had a significant affect on the results of the study. Had it been found that many of the participants believed that the stereotypes associated with their population were true, different results may have been produced.

Also, many of the participants reported that they do not perceive other members of their race to have negative views about them. As discussed earlier in the literature review, this also has an impact on how individuals view themselves. Being exposed to negative views about ones population, can lead to an individual viewing himself in a negative way.¹ However, this is not likely to occur, unless the negative judgments are put forth by persons whom the targeted individual views as significant, such as parents, family members, peers, or mentors. Therefore, since many of the respondents reported that they did not perceive other members of their race to feel negatively about them, there is a large possibility that they were not exposed to these negative stereotypes, or that they were properly prepared to deal with them.

¹Michael Hughes and David H. Demo, "Self-Perceptions of Black Americans: Self-Esteem and Personal Efficacy," American Journal of Sociology, 95, 1 (1989): 132-159.

Also, high levels of self-esteem were reported among respondents. Also discussed earlier in the literature review, high levels of self-esteem have generally been found in African American males.² This too may be attributed to the support systems in an individual's life. In an environment where prejudice and discrimination are apparent, extra encouragement and attention may be put on establishing and maintaining high levels of self-esteem among African American males.

Theoretical Implications

This study consisted of self-reported survey research on African American males' opinion of themselves with respects to negative stereotypes associated with their population, and it's relationship to their self-esteem. The labeling theory was used as a theoretical framework in this study. The labeling theory suggests that when individuals are assigned a label, not only will others have a tendency to react to the subject according to that label, but the target individual will began to behave in a way that is characteristic of the label. This theory examined the respondents view of themselves, as it relates to the negative stereotypes, or labels, that have been associated with their population over the years.

The labeling theory does have implications in this study, depending on who is doing the labeling. If the labeling is being done by someone viewed by the individual as significant, the individual will more than likely begin to view himself as a reflection of the label, and also begin to exhibit behavior that is characteristic of that label.

²Jean S. Phinney, "Ethnic and American Identity as Predictors of Self-Esteem Among African American, Latino, and White Adolescents," *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 26, 2 (1997): 165-185.

Limitations of the Study

The sample used in this study consisted of only those African American males who were visiting a local mall, or a local health club, on a given day, during a given time period. Since the majority of African American males do not shop at the local mall or health club used in this study, the results of this study can not be generalized to the entire population of African American males. Also, the sample size was small, which might have had an significant influence on the results of the study.

Given one of the subjects of the research, racial stereotypes, many of the participants expressed their opinion that the questions were offensive to the African American male population. Also, the population that was originally going to be used for this study, was a group of African American males who were on probation for a variety of both minor and major offenses. However, the individuals in administration also felt that the racial stereotype questions were offensive to the African American male population, and therefore, the researcher was not granted permission to question that particular population

Since some of the respondents may have found the stereotype questions offensive, this may have had an effect on the responses to both the racial stereotype questions, as well as the self-esteem questions. They may not have responded honestly, in an effort to prevent any further demolition to their population.

Direction for Further Research

Although there appears to be no significant statistical relationship between negative stereotypes associated with African American males, and their levels of self-esteem, there are still additional areas that are in need for further research. For example, one area is age. A person's view of himself and/or his population is generally established at an early age. Also, as an individual matures, he is better equipped with solutions for

dealing with racism and prejudice. Further research needs to be done with a later childhood or adolescent population.

There may also be a difference in educational, geographical and socioeconomic areas. These definitely have been found to contribute to one's self-esteem, and perceptions of those who are in power positions. A longitudinal study may also be useful in researching this area. A person's life experiences have a significant impact on how he perceives himself, and the world around him.

Finally, a larger sample size may need to be used to obtain a better representation of the African American male population. This sample should be obtained from different geographical and socioeconomic areas with a probability sampling procedure.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

There is no doubt that many African American males are constantly faced with unfair and discriminatory circumstances. Many of these unfair conditions exists because of the negative stereotypes that society holds against their population. As social workers, it is our job to improve the quality of life for all individuals that are in need. In an effort to do this, we must recognize and understand the conditions that African American males are forced to live with. We must also empower African American males, and stress the importance of taking charge and directing one's own life.¹

When we consider the dropout rates, crime rates, survival rates, employment rates, quality of life, and living conditions of many African American men, there is no argument that they are definitely in need. For us as social workers to ignore this need, not only will we be letting down these disadvantaged African American men, but we will be doing the entire social work profession a great injustice. We need to concentrate on program development in areas of stronger social support networks, financial and legal aid, housing, health care, job training, education, and employment.²

For social workers whose concentration deals with young African American children, teaching them ahead of time about prejudices and discrimination, will help to provide them with bright futures. If we prepare them ahead of time for what is to come,

¹Paula Allen-Meares, and Sondra Burman, "The Endangerment of African American Men: An Appeal For Social Work Action," Social Work 40, 2 (1995): 268-274.

²Ibid.

they will be better prepared to deal with discrimination when they are approached with it. Also it may reduce or eliminate any anger that can result from such circumstances, and decrease the chances of behavioral problems in the future. Social workers can also set up a mentoring program, in an effort to provide young African American males with positive role models.

Social workers can work as advocates when dealing with institutions that may be putting forth discriminatory practices.³ Not only will this help to improve the quality of life for African American males, but it will show them that there is a solution. Providing options that are legitimate and fair, can do away with some of the hopelessness that often develops in these situations.

Social workers of all races need to become actively involved in African American's educational, political, and cultural lives.⁴ We live in a society that is constantly involved in change in all areas of social functioning. By being actively involved, social workers can stay abreast of the changes facing the African American population in general, thus, being more effective in working with the population.

Social workers can also link African American males to different resources that may help to improve the quality of life for many African American males. These may include job opportunities, and a variety of skill development or enhancement programs. These may help them to gain certain knowledge and skills that will be essential to proper functioning in the future.

³ Armando T. Morales and Bradford W. Sheafor, Social Work: A Profession of Many Faces, 6th ed., (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1992), 571.

⁴Ibid.

APPENDIX A
COVER LETTER

I would like to ask you to take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. This is a part of a study being conducted by the researcher as requirement for graduation from Clark-Atlanta Graduate School of Social Work. The topic being studied is the relationship between racial stereotypes and self-esteem in African American males. Your answers will assist in assessing the need for social action in enhancing social functioning for African American males. Please do not write your name on the questionnaire, as your answers will be completely confidential. After completion, please fold the questionnaire, and seal it in the envelope provided. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Alicia D. Carter
Graduate Social Work Student
Clark-Atlanta University

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

ALL INFORMATION GIVEN WILL BE KEPT STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. PLEASE DO NOT PLACE YOUR NAME ON THIS SURVEY. Please answer the questions as honestly as possible. This survey is based on your values and feelings, and therefore, there are no right or wrong answers. Your cooperation will greatly be appreciated.

Part I. Background Information

1. What is your age? _____
2. What is the highest level of education completed?
 - _____ 1. 6-8 grade
 - _____ 2. 9-12 grade
 - _____ 3. some college or technical school
 - _____ 4. completed college or technical school
 - _____ 5. some graduate school
 - _____ 6. completed graduate school
3. Have you ever been convicted of a crime other than a traffic offense?
 - _____ 1. Yes
 - _____ 2. No
4. What is your family's average income per year?
 - _____ 1. \$15,000 or less
 - _____ 2. \$25,000 - 16,000
 - _____ 3. \$35,000 - 26,000
 - _____ 4. \$45,000 - 36,000
 - _____ 5. above \$45,000

Part II. Stereotypes

Please rate the following statements by placing a :

1. Yes
2. No

Do you believe that African American males:

5. ☐ Are more likely to commit violent crimes
6. ☐ Are less intelligent than whites
7. ☐ Are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol
8. ☐ Are lazy
9. ☐ Are irresponsible
10. ☐ Have no self-control
11. ☐ Make poor fathers
12. ☐ Are womanizers
13. ☐ Are criminals
14. ☐ Are inarticulate
15. ☐ Can not hold a descent job
16. ☐ Are unwilling to work
17. ☐ Would whether make a living participating in illegal activities
18. ☐ Are dangerous

Do you believe that most African Americans hold the following perceptions that African American males:

19. ☐ Are more likely to commit violent crimes
20. ☐ Are less intelligent than whites
21. ☐ Are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol
22. ☐ Are lazy
23. ☐ Are irresponsible
24. ☐ Have no self-control
25. ☐ Make poor fathers
26. ☐ Are womanizers
27. ☐ Are criminals
28. ☐ Are inarticulate
29. ☐ Can not hold a descent job
30. ☐ Are unwilling to work
31. ☐ Would whether make a living participating in illegal activities
32. ☐ Are dangerous

Do you believe that most White Americans hold the following perceptions that African American males:

33. ____ Are more likely to commit violent crimes
34. ____ Are less intelligent than whites
35. ____ Are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol
36. ____ Are lazy
37. ____ Are irresponsible
38. ____ Have no self-control
39. ____ Make poor fathers
40. ____ Are womanizers
41. ____ Are criminals
42. ____ Are inarticulate
43. ____ Can not hold a descent job
44. ____ Are unwilling to work
45. ____ Would whether make a living participating in illegal activities
46. ____ Are dangerous

III. Self esteem¹

Please rate the following statements by placing a :

1. None of the time.
2. Very rarely.
3. A little of the time
4. Some of the time.
5. A good part of the time.
6. Most of the time.
7. All of the time.

47. ____ I feel that people would not like me if they really knew me well.
48. ____ I feel that others get along much better than I do.
49. ____ I feel that I am a beautiful person.
50. ____ When I am with others I feel they are glad I am with them.
51. ____ I feel that people really like to talk with me.
52. ____ I feel that I am a very competent person.
53. ____ I think I make a good impression on others.
54. ____ I feel that I need more self-confidence.
55. ____ When I am with strangers I am very nervous.

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- 56. ☐ I think that I am a dull person.
- 57. ☐ I feel ugly.
- 58. ☐ I feel that others have more fun than I do.
- 59. ☐ I feel that I bore people.
- 60. ☐ I think my friends find me interesting.
- 61. ☐ I think I have a good sense of humor.
- 62. ☐ I feel very self-conscious when I am with strangers.
- 63. ☐ I feel that if I could be more like people I would have it made.
- 64. ☐ I feel that people have a good time when they are with me.
- 65. ☐ I feel like a wallflower when I go out.
- 66. ☐ I feel I get pushed around more than others.
- 67. ☐ I think I am a rather nice person.
- 68. ☐ I feel that people really like me very much.
- 69. ☐ I feel that I am a likable person.
- 70. ☐ I am afraid I will appear foolish to others.
- 71. ☐ My friends think very highly of me.

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